DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 394 775 RC 020 574

AUTHOR Monahan, Robert G.; And Others
TITLE Rural Teachers' Attitudes toward Inclusion.
PUB DATE Mar 96
NOTE 6p.; In: Rural Goals 2000: Building Programs That Work; see RC 020 545.
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150) -- Tests/Evaluation Instruments (160)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Elementary Secondary Education; *Inclusive Schools; Mainstreaming; *Regular and Special Education Relationship; *Rural Schools; Special Needs Students; *Teacher Attitudes; *Teacher Collaboration; Teacher Role
IDENTIFIERS Attitudes toward Disabled; *South Carolina; Teacher Surveys

ABSTRACT

A survey of 342 rural South Carolina teachers examined teacher attitudes toward inclusion of special needs students in regular education settings. The survey included 25 statements, to which respondents reacted on a five-point scale from strongly agree to strongly disagree. Major topics addressed included regular education teachers, collaboration and team teaching, special education, students, and families. Over 60 percent of respondents indicated that inclusion will not succeed because of resistance from regular education teachers; regular education teachers do not have the instructional skills and educational background to teach special needs students; regular education teachers prefer sending special needs students to special education classrooms rather than having special education teachers deliver services in the regular classroom; special and regular education teachers should demonstrate collaboration with all special needs students in the regular classroom; necessary resources are not available for inclusion to succeed; and special needs students improve their social skills when in a regular classroom, but they need more attention and assistance than the regular education teacher can provide. The survey provided no evidence concerning rural parents' views on inclusive school programs. Among the conclusions was the recommendation that continuous teacher education focus on attitudes that enable all teachers to work effectively with special needs students. Includes survey questions and response percentages. Contains 12 references. (TD)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

DIANE MONTGOMERY

(PARENT)

TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

Robert G. Monahan
School of Education
Lander University
Greenwood, South Carolina

Sheila B. Marino
School of Education
Lander University
Greenwood, South Carolina

Rosemary Miller
Beaufort County Schools
Hilton Head, South Carolina

ED 394 775

RURAL TEACHERS' ATTITUDES TOWARD INCLUSION

Inclusion

Inclusion is a term used by the education reform movement to challenge schools to the philosophy that all students can learn, even those with disabilities. The terms used in the special education literature prior to the reform movement were Least Restrictive Environment (LRE) and mainstreaming. LRE is the language of the Education for the Handicapped Children Act (EHA) passed in 1975 by the U.S. Congress and states that all children with disabilities should be educated to the maximum extent possible with their nondisabled peers. From this evolved the term mainstreaming with its focus on placement of disabled students in general education classes. The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 also focused attention on the inclusion of the disabled in schools and the work force in the private as well as public sector. Many researchers, including Will (1986), Wang and Walberg (1988), Lilly (1988), and Stainback and Stainback (1992), directed their efforts toward inclusion programming. The rural teachers' attitudes toward inclusion will have an impact on the development of these programs in the rural areas.

Inclusion has become the buzz word across the United States. Since the passage of the Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975 (PL 94-142) and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) of 1990 (PL 101-476) there has been a mandate that eligible students with special needs be provided with an array of services at the site they would attend if they did not have special needs and that this must be in the least restrictive environment.

In establishing programs for persons with special needs to participate in an inclusive setting, it has been suggested that several components should be included such as an atmosphere and culture for change, the provision of an opportunity to articulate a vision of inclusion, the planning and provision of appropriate resources, monitoring and documenting progress, and the provision of ongoing training for the staff and families. Ortiz and Garcia (1988) suggest that in providing an appropriate education, a pre-referral process should be employed to reduce the number of inappropriate referrals and ensure appropriate support services for the persons with special needs.

RC 020574

As we move toward the education goals for the schools 2000, the current trend in the United States is to serve students with special needs in inclusive settings with persons who are not disabled as much as possible. The research reported by Slavin (1987, 1990) demonstrated that students with special needs improved their social interaction and academic performance in inclusive settings. West and Idol (1991) reported that students with special needs in the regular education settings required collaboration on the part of all persons who serve the students. Davis (1989) reported that if inclusion is to be implemented successfully, it must become integrated into the entire education system to meet the diverse needs of all students.

For the implementation of the concept of full inclusion to take place, everyone, including the parents, teachers, administrators, and other related service staff must buy into the concept of full inclusion. Inclusion as it has been embraced by the special education field appears to have many meanings. To these authors, inclusion means providing a full continuum of service delivery options to all students with special needs in all settings including rural settings. Students in inclusive schools work in flexible learning environments with the implementation of teaching strategies such as cooperative learning, peer mediated learning, collaborative and team teaching (Schragg & Burnette, 1993).

The present study was designed to evaluate teacher attitudes toward inclusion in South Carolina. We hypothesized that greater support through teacher training, in-school services, and resources would be associated with a more positive attitude toward inclusion.

Method

Three hundred and sixty-four surveys were randomly distributed to teachers in rural settings throughout South Carolina. Three hundred and forty-two surveys (94%) were returned. The survey was made up of twenty-five statements which the respondents reacted to on a five-point scale from strongly agree to strongly disagree. Major areas addressed on the survey included: regular education teachers (role, attitudes, and knowledge); collaboration and team teaching; special education (role and resources); students (rights, performance/skills and perceptions); and families.

Results

The results are reported in Table 1. According to 72% of the respondents, inclusion of students with special needs will not succeed because of too much resistance from regular education teachers. Seventy-five percent of the respondents felt that regular education teachers do not have the instructional skills and educational backgrounds to teach students with special needs. Sixty-seven percent of the respondents indicated that regular education teachers prefer sending students with special needs to special education classrooms rather than having special education teachers deliver services in the regular education teacher's classroom. According to the survey, 51% of the respondents felt that regular education teachers have the primary responsibility for the education of students with special needs in their classrooms.

TABLE I
SURVEY OF TEACHER ATTITUDES ON INCLUSION
SOUTH CAROLINA

	A STRONGLY AGREE	B AGREE	C NEUTRAL	D DISAGREE	E STRONGLY DISAGREE
1. Although inclusion of students with special needs is a good idea, one reason it will not succeed is too much resistance from regular education teachers.	15%	57%	22%	3%	3%
2. Regular education teachers have the instructional skills and educational background to teach students with special needs.	3%	9%	13%	45%	30%
3. Special education and regular education teachers should demonstrate collaboration with all students with special needs in the regular education classroom.	51%	33%	11%	5%	0%
4. The regular education teacher receives little assistance from special education teachers in modifying instruction for students with special needs.	9%	26%	29%	31%	5%
5. Bringing special education teachers into regular education classrooms can cause serious difficulties in determining "who is in charge".	5%	14%	18%	51%	12%
6. Regular education teachers prefer sending students with special needs to special education classrooms rather than having special education teachers deliver services in their classroom.	22%	45%	23%	6%	4%
7. Regular education teachers are comfortable co-teaching content areas with special education teachers.	3%	30%	33%	30%	4%
8. Special education teachers provide educational support for all students.	14%	43%	24%	18%	1%
9. The special education teacher **only** provides assistance to those students with special needs.	7%	26%	18%	27%	22%
10. Regular education teachers have the primary responsibility for the education of students with special needs in their classrooms.	12%	39%	12%	25%	12%
11. The redistribution of special education resources into the regular education classroom decreases the instructional load of the regular education teacher.	4%	17%	28%	31%	20%
12. The inclusion of students with special needs negatively affect the performance of regular education students.	6%	12%	20%	42%	20%
13. Students with special needs have a basic right to receive their education in the regular education classroom.	18%	41%	23%	15%	3%
14. Students with special needs improve their social skills when placed in a regular education classroom.	21%	47%	17%	11%	4%
15. Students with special needs lose the label of being "stupid," "strange," or "failures" when placed in the regular education classroom.	14%	19%	10%	38%	19%
16. Gifted students are neglected in inclusive classrooms.	18%	16%	21%	34%	11%
17. Students with special needs benefit from inclusion in the regular education classroom.	15%	47%	24%	13%	1%
18. Special needs students do better academically in inclusive classrooms.	8%	15%	45%	27%	5%
19. Students with special needs require more attention and assistance than the regular education teacher can provide.	28%	43%	17%	7%	5%
20. Students with special needs demonstrate more behavior problems than regular education students.	8%	18%	38%	33%	3%
21. Students with special needs adjust well when placed in regular education classrooms.	1%	18%	39%	35%	7%
22. Peers are not accepting of students with special needs in the classroom.	4%	10%	31%	48%	7%
23. The study skills of students with special needs are inadequate for success in the regular education classroom.	6%	31%	32%	27%	4%
24. Although inclusion of students with special needs is important, the necessary resources are not available for it to succeed.	17%	40%	21%	18%	4%
25. Families are supportive of inclusive school programs.	7%	27%	38%	21%	7%

In the area of collaboration, 84% of the respondents in the rural settings indicated that special education and regular education teachers should demonstrate collaboration with all students with special needs in the regular education classroom. Sixty-three percent of the respondents indicated that bringing the special education teacher into regular education classrooms would not cause serious difficulties in determining "who is in charge."

In looking at the role of the rural special education teacher, 57% of the respondents felt that special education provides educational support for all students. Fifty-one percent of the respondents indicated that the redistribution of special education resources into the regular education classroom would not decrease the instructional load of the regular education teacher. Twenty-two percent of the respondents stated that necessary resources are available for inclusion to succeed.

In reviewing statements associated with student performance, 62% of the respondents in rural settings stated that the inclusion of students with special needs would not negatively affect the performance of regular education students. Sixty-eight percent of the respondents felt that students with special needs improve their social skills when placed in a regular education classroom. Sixty-two percent of the respondents felt that students with special needs benefit from inclusion in the regular education classroom; however, seventy-one percent of the respondents did feel that students with special needs require more attention and assistance than the regular education teacher can provide. Fifty-five percent of the respondents indicated that peers are accepting of students with special needs in the classroom.

There was no conclusive evidence that parents in rural settings are supportive or non-supportive of inclusive school programs according to the results of the survey.

Conclusion

In examining the teacher education programs, we notice that inclusion encourages the merger of special education and regular education. The teacher education programs should demonstrate the inclusion of appropriate information about all children across the total curriculum instead of relying on one course in the area of special education to address the entire scope of information for future teachers. As students engage in clinical experiences in rural settings, these should include opportunities for future teachers to work with the full range of students with various capabilities. The programs should model and promote team teaching and cooperative learning; so that these experiences will enable the translation of theory into practice. The programs should also provide planning, implementation and evaluation opportunities.

Teacher educators should model a positive attitude toward inclusion and respect other professional opinions. There should be continuous pre-service and in-service education focusing on attitudes that enable all teachers to work effectively with students who may have special needs.

References

Davis, W.E. (1989). The regular education initiative debate: Its promises and problems. Exceptional Children, 55, 440-447.

Gartner, A., & Lipsky, D.K. (1987). Beyond special education: Toward a quality system for all students. Harvard Educational Review, 57, 367-395.

Hagerty, G.J., & Abramson, M. (1987). Impediments to implementing national policy change for mildly handicapped students. Exceptional Children, 53, 315-323.

Lilly, M.S. (1988). The regular education initiative: A force for change in general and special education. Education and Training in mental Retardation, 23, 253-260.

Ortiz, A.A., & Garcia, S.B. (1988). A prereferral process for preventing inappropriate referrals of Hispanic students to special education. In A.A. Ortiz & B.A. Ramirez (eds.). Schools and the culturally diverse exceptional student: Promising practices and future directions (pp. 6-18). Reston, VA: Council for Exceptional Children.

Schragg, J., & Burnette, J. (1993, 1994, Winter). Inclusive schools. Research Roundup, 10(2).

Slavin, R.E. (1990). General education under the regular education initiative: How must it change? Remedial and Special Education, 11, 40-50.

Slavin, R.E. (1987). Ability grouping and student achievement in elementary schools: A best-evidence synthesis. Review of Educational Research, 57, 293-336.

Stainback, S., & Stainback, W. (1992). Curriculum considerations in inclusive classrooms: Facilitating learning for all students. Baltimore, MD: Paul H. Brooks.

Wang, M.C., & Walberg, H.J. (1988). Four fallacies of segregationism. Exceptional Children, 55, 128-137.

West, J.F., & Idol, L. (1990). Collaborative consultation in the education of mildly handicapped and at-risk students. Remedial and Special Education, 11(1), 22-31.

Will, M.C. (1986). Educating children with learning problems. A shared responsibility. Exceptional Children, 52, 411-415.